

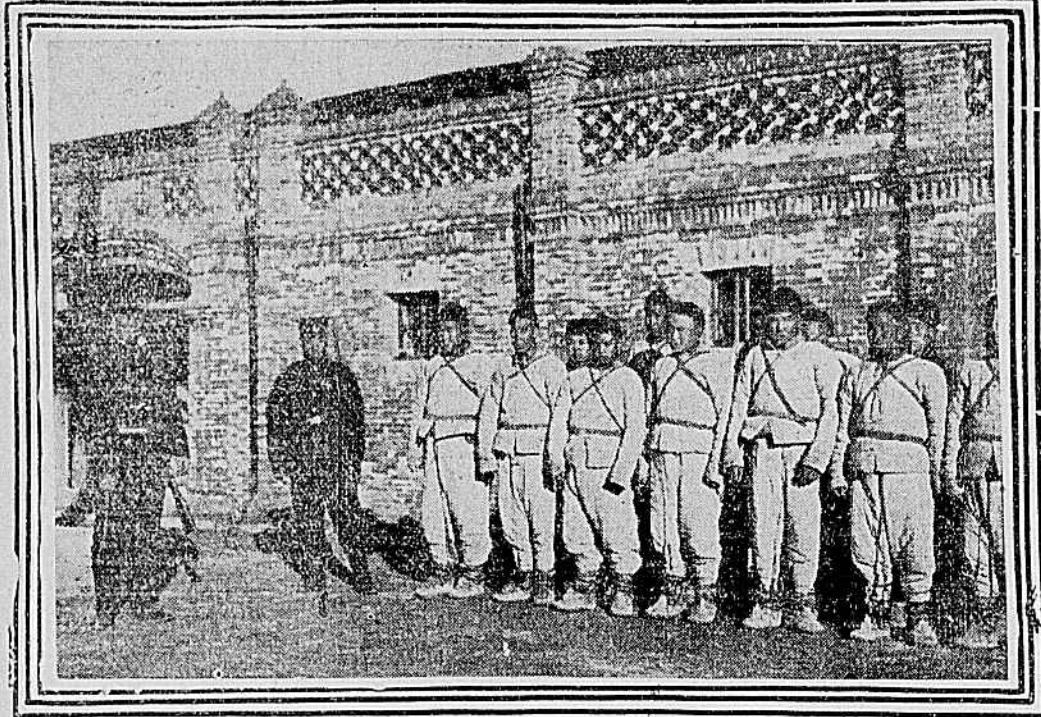
Huang Houtzes--An Army of Robbers



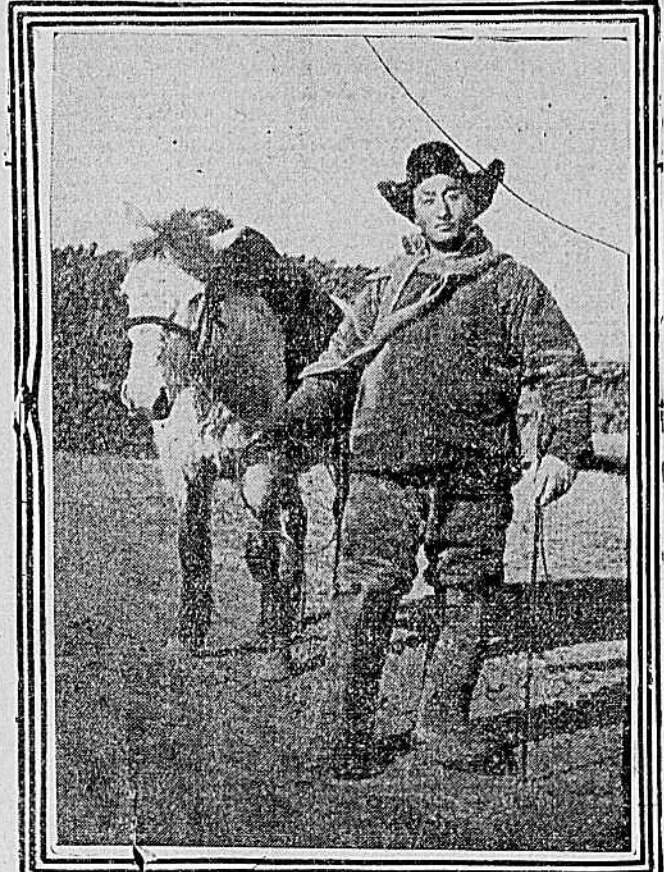
AT EVERY DEPOT IS A SQUAD OF CHINESE SOLDIERS.



GROUP OF MANCHURIAN POSSIBLE BRIGANDS.



HUANG HOUTZE CONVICTS IN PRISON AT MUKDEN.



YOUR COACHMAN MAY BE A BRIGAND IN DISGUISE.

Two Hundred Thousand Bandits Who Collect Toll of All Travelers--How Villages are Blackmailed--Spies and Signal Fires--Recent Hold-ups on the Trans-Siberian Railroad--The Bandits and the Sepoys--Piracy--Danger to Foreigners--The Brigands of Kirin.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Chin-Chou, Manchuria, 1909.
I have been riding all day on the railroad with armed guards at both ends of my car. We had a company of soldiers in the third-class compartment next to the engine and every station was guarded. There has been a recent outbreak of the Huang Houtzes. They have been holding up trains in the various parts of Manchuria, and just the other day they robbed the express under the very shadow of the city of Harbin and captured \$40,000. Even here, in the south, the trains are not safe, and they all have soldiers

upon them. The first thing one sees on his arrival at every depot is a squad of Chinese soldiers carrying Mauser rifles. They line themselves up in front of the train and stand to attention until it pulls out.

The Tatars of Manchuria. These guards are a necessity on account of the Huang Houtzes, who form, perhaps, the most remarkable organization of brigands now known. They might be called the Tatars of Manchuria, for they are in number and daring the veiled, camel-mounted bandits of the Sahara. They have rapidly increased since the Boxer uprising, and especially since the Japan-Russian War. They now number over 200,000, and their agents are to be found in every city and village. They have a regular toll which they collect on all travelers outside the railroads, and every Chinese passenger who goes over Manchuria on foot, in a cart, or on horseback, must pay tribute to them. They have fixed charges as to goods in transit, and the carts carrying freight are marked with little printed flags with red borders, furnished by them. Upon the flags are printed Chinese characters, certifying that the owner has paid his toll, and that the vehicle and drivers are not to be molested. Otherwise the man is sure to be robbed and his men may be killed.

A few months ago on the same day 100 carts started out from Mukden. Of these all but two had paid their toll and bore Huang Houtze flags. The men and goods in the carts so flagged completed their journey in safety; but the others, who had refused to pay the toll, were attacked by the bandits before they had gone thirteen miles from the city. The goods were stolen and their drivers were killed.

During my stay in Mukden, I talked with the agent of a big mining concession, a man who represents a large organization of British and Japanese capitalists. He is opening up a gold region in the Kirin province, and has to send his supplies to the mining camps across country. He says he dares not start out a cart without such protection, and that in important cases he usually employs one of the brigands to go along in person. He did this with two English mining engineers whom he sent forward last week. Said he:

"They might have gotten through all right with the Huang Houtze flags on their carts, but outside the great organization of brigands, there are petty bands of robbers who might attack them. Such men will not dare to touch any one guarded by a Huang Houtze; for, if caught, they would surely be killed by the latter."

Mounted Robbers. The Huang Houtzes are well mounted. They have Chinese ponies, which can go thirty miles a day without tiring, and can be pushed to twice that. The ponies are never groomed and are exceedingly dirty. The bandits carry nothing with them but their arms, except a long fur coat, which they wear in the winter, and a quilt, folded over their shoulders. They have modern guns and are armed with revolvers. The majority carry Mauser rifles or big bore Winchester. Some have Russian pistols, and many have Japanese weapons, which they have collected from the battlefields or have stolen from the Japanese. They have arsenals of North China were looted and the arms distributed gratis by the officials. They have captured some guns from the Russians during the past few years and they have altogether a splendid equipment.

A Big Organization. I am told that these bandits have existed as an organization for ages, but that they have never been so associated together as now. Their reports have been the mountainous regions of Mongolia and Manchuria, from whence they have gone down regularly to prey upon the people of the lowlands. The words Huang Houtze mean red beard. It is said that these outlaws sometimes dye their hair and beards red, and that this decorated their names become synonymous with the devil in the minds of the northern Chinese.

I understand that each band has one chief, with several minor chiefs, who form his bodyguard. There are about fifty of these head men in a band, and each has ten or twenty brigands under him, the whole making a gang of 1,000 or more. Such a band will take charge of a certain part of the country, similar bands being located in other regions. The brigands have a system of intercommunication by which they can combine and by which the guarantee of one company is respected by the others.

Every band has its secret agents in the locality where it operates. These men know all about the business of the towns and villages. They notify the bandits what cargoes of goods are to be shipped and, as far as possible, the wealth and standing of the shipper. They are said to keep books, including the rolls of the bandits' names and the pay they receive, as well as the profit of each robbery and its disposition.

Taxing the Villages. The Huang Houtzes are taxing the villages of Manchuria. The chief of the band holding the right to certain territory keeps track of the wealth of its inhabitants, and he makes almost every man pay for protection from the Huang Houtze raids. Villages are taxed as such, and in these

cases the brigands agree to keep off other robbers. They sometimes station guards about the towns, and in case of attack come to the aid of the police. In such places the Huang Houtze agent furnishes the flags to travelers, and this is done likewise in the larger cities.

Take, for instance, Newchwang, which is the chief seaport of Manchuria. It has a Huang Houtze agent, who has a regular office where any one may go and buy the right to travel over the country. It is only recently that it has been necessary for foreigners to have such protection, but now all people going alone will do well to get Huang Houtze flags. Just the other day a young woman, an English girl, who was going across the country in a cart, was swooped down upon by a band of fifteen mounted Huang Houtzes. They robbed her of all her belongings, including even her shoes and stockings, leaving her bare-

footed and bareheaded by the roadside. She had only \$40.

Held for Ransom.

In this case the young woman was a missionary and the brigands knew that she was probably poor. Had she been a rich Chinese lady she might have been held for ransom. This has been done with Chinese merchants. Not long ago a silk trader was caught within five miles of the city in which he lived and carried off to the mountains. The Huang Houtzes kept him there until the \$20,000 which they demanded as a ransom was paid. Not a few merchants when they have valuable cargoes to take from one place to another hire companies of these brigands to go along with them, and this is so on both sides of the great wall.

Railroad Hold-ups.

In the past few months the Huang Houtzes have held up several trains on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and especially on that branch of it which comes down through Manchuria. I talked last night with a man who was on a train stopped near Harbin. This is one of the biggest cities of northern Manchuria, a large military post, and surrounded with Russian soldiers. Nevertheless, the Huang Houtzes had arranged to ditch the cars and rob the passengers. They had twisted the rails just above an embankment about twenty feet high and were waiting on the hill nearby for the express to come. In the meantime the patrolman had discovered the injury done to the track. He fired three shots, and thus warned the engineer so that the train was stopped within about fifty feet of where the rails were broken. Upon the cars was a large guard of Cossacks, who made a demonstration. This frightened the bandits and they remained on a neighboring hill while the train stopped. They watched the railroad men, guarded by the Cossacks, relay the tracks and fired a parting volley at them as the train pulled away.

The Huang Houtzes and Sepoys.

These bandits will have to be controlled by the Chinese. Neither the Japanese nor the Russians will permit a continuation of the attacks upon their trains. As it is now, there seems to be a combination between the Chinese troops and Chinese officials and Huang Houtzes. It is even said that some of the policemen of the villages are themselves Huang Houtzes, and that the officials of the larger cities are in alliance with them. Every few months some soldiers are sent out to pull them down. They come back, bringing the heads of what they say were Huang Houtzes, but which it is generally believed, are the heads of coolies, whom they have killed instead.

These brigands are very daring. They do not seem afraid of death and they will fight who are attacked. It was just after the Boxer trouble that 1,400 of them came down through the great wall and advanced toward the railway. The Chinese asked for help; and some British officers and a company of East Indian troops were sent against them. This company was the Fourth Punjab Infantry. It found the brigands in a town about ten miles from the railway and fired upon them. They returned the fire; and at the first volley Major Browning, who was in command, was killed, and Lieutenant Skilling was wounded. Several of the Sepoys were also killed. The firing became general and a retreat was ordered. The East Indians, who were on foot, were pursued by the Huang Houtzes on horseback and they had great trouble in getting back to the railway. The next day a company of 700 from the same infantry regiment went out with 300 Japanese soldiers and attacked the brigands. They

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